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# RUSSIA

## PARTISAN WAR IN CHECHNYA ON THE EVE OF THE WWII COMMEMORATION

### SUMMARY

The conflict in Chechnya between Russian forces and Chechen rebels that broke out in December 1994 has entered a new phase: partisan war. After a March 21 Russian offensive resulted in the capture of the last major strongholds of supports of Chechen President Dzhokhar Dudayev - Shali, Argun, and Gudermes in the lowlands of eastern Chechnya - Chechen fighters melted into the mountainous eastern, southern, and western regions of the country. While the style of warfare has changed, for the most part the abusive conduct of Russian forces has not; Russian troops continue to commit serious violations of humanitarian law against the civilian population in the region.

The following report documents abuses by Russian forces in the mountainous towns of Vedeno and Nozhai-Yurt situated along Chechnya's eastern border with Dagestan.<sup>1</sup> Difficult to access, these regions have received little attention. Yet Russians have shelled civilian areas, indiscriminately fired on refugee columns, and looted and wantonly destroyed civilian property in their pursuit of elusive Dudayev fighters. Violations during the period examined in this report include indiscriminate fire, direct attacks on civilians, attacks on displaced persons in transit, looting, and abuses during disarmament. By far the worst violation during this period was the probable massacre of between 100 and 200 civilians between April 6 and 8, 1995, in the village of Samaskhi in western Chechnya.

Another abusive development in recent weeks relates to the manner in which Russian forces have begun to disarm whole villages (*see* "Reprisals Against Civilians in the Course of Disarmament"). To disarm these villages is entirely legitimate, but Russian troops have habitually set an arbitrary figure for the number of weapons the village must turn over. If the village cannot meet this demand - which it often cannot since village elders have only limited influence over Dudayev fighters - it is sometimes subjected to shelling or harassment.

The abuses documented in the Chechnya war are forbidden by international human rights and humanitarian instruments to which Russia is a party. Protocol II additional to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, which deals with internal armed conflict, mandates humane treatment of civilians and those who have ceased to take part in hostilities. Article 4 forbids "violence to the life, health, or physical or mental well-being of persons, in particular murder as well as . . . torture, mutilation or any form of corporal punishment." It also prohibits the taking of hostages, collective punishments, outrages against personal dignity, pillage, and threats thereof. United Nations General Assembly Resolution number 2444 (1968), which also relates to internal armed conflicts, establishes standards for distinguishing between combatants and civilians and for sparing the latter as much as possible. The U.N. Convention against Torture and Other Forms of Cruel and Degrading Treatment forbids beatings, torture, and other mistreatment in detention.

This report - the fourth in a series by Human Rights Watch/Helsinki - documents Russian forces' flagrant violations of these international obligations, and aims to expose violations perpetrated since the release of our last report, in February 1995.<sup>2</sup> It also highlights the terrible irony that on May 9 and 10, 1995, world leaders will convene in Moscow to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War Two against the backdrop of unchecked abuse by Russian troops in Chechnya. Human Rights Watch hopes that information about the human rights abuse attending the conflict will serve to spur the international community to condemn, and help stop and punish the abuse.

This report is based on a week-long field investigation, from April 22-29, 1995, by one researcher from Human Rights Watch/Helsinki and one from the Moscow branch of the human rights division of the Russian "Memorial" Society. They travelled to Khasavyurt, Pokrovskoye, and Abdurashit-Otar in Dagestan, all on the Chechen border, and interviewed displaced persons from the zone of conflict. Unless otherwise indicated, all testimony cited here was given to representatives of this team. Individuals cited here by their first names asked that their full names be withheld.

This report's focus on Russian forces in no way suggests that Chechen forces have not committed serious violations of the rules of war. The most probable Chechen violation is using civilians as shields. The difficulties of access have prevented us from conducting recent investigations into the rebels' recent practices, although we have documented some instances of their abuses in a previous report. For example, we have documented that Chechen forces have stored ammunition near a civilian area, causing the destruction of several civilian structures.<sup>3</sup> It is difficult to prove without entering the region whether Chechen forces have taken up positions relative to civilian dwellings and whether they have given civilians clear warning before taking up such positions.

In the period covered in this report (March - April), Chechen fighters made a brick factory into their headquarters, and nearby civilian dwellings suffered. We have been unable to ascertain whether the Chechen fighters notified the civilian population in the immediate area to warn them of the need to evacuate.

In addition, Chechen authorities announced that they had executed a Russian pilot, but this has not been independently confirmed. In the early stages of the conflict, Chechen authorities made similar threats to execute Russian troops held captive.

Human Rights Watch/Helsinki takes no position on Chechnya's claim to independence. Our concern is that all parties obey humanitarian law designed to protect civilian and disarmed or disabled combatants.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Human Rights Watch/Helsinki condemns in the strongest terms the conduct of Russian forces described in this newsletter. We call on Russian forces to:

- Cease indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks on civilian objects;
- Cease all attacks on hospitals, mosques and schools;
- Cease taking civilian hostages;
- Cease the beating, torture, and other mistreatment of detainees in Mozdok and other "filtration camps;"
- Grant full and ongoing access to detention centers to the International Committee of the Red Cross and other humanitarian organizations;

- Publish lists of all prisoners, their ages, where they were captured, where they are being detained, and other relevant details;
- Establish a special task force within the military police to investigate and put an end to looting in areas under Russian control;
- Reinforce the code of military conduct among troops, emphasizing the consequences of looting and other illegal conduct;
- Bring to justice officers and enlisted men suspected of humanitarian law violations in open trials before independent tribunals and punish those found guilty in a manner consistent with international law;
- Halt all aerial bombardments, long-range artillery shelling, and other military operations that are being used to target or indiscriminately fire on civilians; and
- Allow a mission from the office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights to visit the crisis region freely and as soon as possible.

We remind Chechen forces of their duty under Protocol II not to use civilians and civilian property - homes, apartment buildings, hospitals, and the like - as human shields. In certain cases we examined, it was not clear whether Chechen forces attempted to use civilian objects as shields. In any case, however, the use of human shields does not relieve Russian forces of their obligation to minimize civilian casualties. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki calls on Chechen forces carefully to evaluate their positions in Chechen villages and the potential danger they bring to civilians, to warn civilians of potential danger, and, should danger warrant, to organize and facilitate the safe evacuation of villagers.

### **United Nations Policy**

On February 27, 1995, the U.N. Commission on Human Rights in a chairman's statement expressed its "deep concern over the disproportionate use of force by the Russian Armed Forces" in Chechnya. That same month, the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights was denied permission by the Russian government to conduct a fact-finding mission to the region. We call on Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and the High Commissioner on Human Rights to:

- Maintain pressure on the Russian government to allow a mission from the High Commissioner for Human Rights to visit the crisis region to investigate violations of humanitarian law by both sides, a mission which would result in a report by the High Commissioner and which would be conducted with full cooperation and guaranteed free access to the region; and
- Condemn forcefully Russia's violations of human rights and humanitarian law in the Chechen war.

Human Rights Watch/Helsinki also urges the Special Rapporteur on Torture and the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention to send missions to investigate abuse in the area of crisis, issue public reports in a timely manner, and subsequently report to the 52nd Session of the Commission on Human Rights in 1996.

### **Council of Europe Policy**

On January 10, 1995, the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly's Political Affairs Committee expressed its grave "concern about the situation in Chechnya" and "unreservedly condemned the indiscriminate use of military force

against the civilian population." On February 2 the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly as such passed a resolution according to which it decided to "suspend the procedure concerning statutory opinion on Russia's request for membership." In the resolution the Assembly condemned the "indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force by the Russian military, in particular against the civilian population, which is in violation of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and their 1977 Second Protocol as well as of the OSCE Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security".

### **European Union Policy**

Human Rights Watch applauds the stance the European Union has taken, under the leadership of the French Presidency, against humanitarian law violations in Chechnya and how it has translated its sound condemnation of atrocities into concrete action. On March 9, 1995, Foreign Minister of France Alain Juppé, who served as past, present and future president of the E.U.'s Council of Ministers to Moscow, made it clear that the E.U. was ready to use economic pressure and access to European markets as a lever to force President Yeltsin to end violations of human rights in Chechnya. Foreign Minister Juppé and his colleagues from Germany and Spain told the Russian president that an interim trade agreement with Russia would not be signed until assurances that human rights will be respected in Chechnya. The trade agreement had been negotiated and finalized with the inclusion of human rights conditionality clauses in 1994.

This important step by the E.U. Troika followed a resolution passed by the European Parliament on January 19 which approved "the [European] Commission's decision to suspend the process of ratifying the interim agreement" and called on the Council "not to make any further progress with the final ratification of the Partnership Agreement with the Russian Federation."

On April 10 the E.U. General Affairs Council - comprising the foreign ministers of all member states - confirmed that it considered it "impossible to sign the interim trade agreement with Russia because the conditions set by the fifteen member states had not been observed." The four criteria concerning Chechnya were: the permanent presence of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE); a cease-fire; the start of talks making a political settlement possible; and the provision of humanitarian aid.

On March 15 the E.U. "utterly condemned atrocities committed against civilians in violation of basic human rights," appealed to the Russian authorities "to put an end to violence against the people, to conclude a cease-fire without delay, to start negotiations to allow humanitarian aid to be sent to the stricken population without hindrance, in keeping with international humanitarian law" and once again urged "that the OSCE Assistance Group in Chechnya be set up quickly so that it can help achieve these objectives."

### **OSCE Policy**

We welcome the formation of the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Assistance Group, which was deployed in Grozny on April 18 with a mandate to, among other things, monitor human rights violations. We especially urge the group to:

- Insist that officers and soldiers responsible for abuse be brought to justice in the appropriate judicial fora;
- Monitor and report on the conduct of Russian and Chechen forces;
- Oversee the return of displaced persons to prevent any retaliation by Chechen or Russian forces;

- Monitor and report on conditions in detention facilities and investigate allegations of torture and other forms of cruel treatment;
- Facilitate relief supplies and relief work to ensure that all aid is distributed on the basis of need and not according to political calculations; and
- Ensure access for accredited journalists and nongovernmental organizations.

### United States Policy

In the weeks preceding the May 10, 1995 summit with Russian President Boris Yeltsin, the Clinton Administration has offered general criticism of Russian conduct in Chechnya, expressed deep concern for loss of civilian lives, and called for a political solution to the conflict. It has also played an active role in organizing and deploying the OSCE's Assistance Group, over Russia's objections. Yet it has failed to single out Russia for its systematic brutality against civilians, to condition the May 10 summit on an end to attacks on civilians, or to use its influence in international lending institutions as leverage to force Russia's compliance with humanitarian norms.

The Clinton Administration's recent public statements on Chechnya are somewhat sharper than those it made earlier in the war, when it expressed regret for the loss of life but tempered all utterances with a reminder that it considered the Chechnya war an "internal affair." In a key speech on March 29 concerning U.S. policy toward Russia, U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher described Russia's conduct in Chechnya as "tragically wrong" and declared the escalation of military activities in March a "serious mistake."<sup>4</sup> He has warned in several fora - including a March 24 meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev - that as a consequence, Russia's role in the Group of Seven meeting in Halifax, scheduled for June, 1995, would not expand as previously envisioned.<sup>5</sup> In the aftermath of the massacre in Samashki in April 1995, U.S. State Department spokesperson Nicholas Burns announced that the administration was "disturbed by reports of continued, large-scale bombing in the south of Chechnya" and stated that the war was having a "negative" effect on U.S.-Russian relations.<sup>6</sup>

While these statements of concern are welcome, they have had no visible impact on the Russian government's prosecution of the war. By limiting its condemnation of Russian abuse to words, the administration has lost the opportunity to send a strong message to Moscow that it will not countenance the murder of civilians. As a result, the May 10 summit is likely to be viewed by the Russian government as the U.S. government's tacit acceptance of the conduct of Russian forces in Chechnya.

More disturbing still, generous international financial assistance to Russia, in which the U.S. government plays a critical role, belies the administration's stated commitment to ending civilian suffering in Chechnya and bestows on the Russian government the international prestige it keenly seeks. In fiscal year 1995, the U.S. has pledged to disburse \$346 million to the Russian Federation alone in economic assistance under the Freedom Support Act. Indeed, on April 11, as the news of the atrocities in Samashki became public, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) finalized a US \$6.8 billion loan to Russia to help close Russia's budget deficit.<sup>7</sup> The loan, the second largest in IMF history, provided the Russian government with \$1 billion up front in late April, and will disburse \$500million every month for the next year. The IMF has conditioned the loan on strict economic discipline, but refuses - as is its general practice - to even consider human rights issues in the context of its lending activity.

In addition, in April the World Bank approved a loan agreement for Russia totaling \$456.8 million to support the creation of private housing markets, train personnel in the finance industry and modernize the tax system. Like the IMF, the World Bank resists conditioning aid on compliance with human rights commitments. In early May the World Bank approved a \$100 million loan for gas distribution. Additional loans - specifically \$320 million for urban

transportation and \$600 million for "import rehabilitation" - are expected to be approved in late May.

Human Rights Watch/Helsinki calls for President Clinton during his upcoming trip to Moscow to:

- In private meetings with President Yeltsin and in public, forcefully condemn Russian atrocities and indiscriminate bombing and shelling;
- Call on the Russian government to hold accountable those guilty of killing civilians, beating and torturing detainees, illegally imprisoning civilians, raping, and looting;
- Repeat his calls for a humanitarian cease-fire, particularly the suspension of bombing and shelling; and
- Meet with Russian Commissioner for Human Rights Sergei Kovalev to hear a first-hand account of the abusive conduct of Russian forces and show support for Mr. Kovalev's courageous monitoring.

We call on the Clinton administration and its Western allies to:

- Use their influence in the IMF to condition upcoming disbursements of the \$6.8 billion loan on ending humanitarian law violations and taking concrete steps to bring perpetrators to justice; and
- Immediately freeze the World Bank loan due for consideration in late May, 1995.

### **INDISCRIMINATE FIRE**

Russian artillery and air bombardments continue to kill and maim civilians in the Chechen conflict. Indiscriminate fire against Shali, Argun, and to some extent Gudermes - cities that fell to Russian forces in late March and early April - has been extremely heavy because Dudayev fighters often took up positions or had command posts within the city. Argun, a battle area since the beginning of the conflict, equals Grozny in the level of destruction.<sup>8</sup>

Since the fall of Gudermes, Shali, and Argun, fighting moved from the plains to hill country along the Dagestani border. Russian forces moved to isolate Dudayev forces and seal the border with Dagestan. With a few exceptions, such as Alleroi and Belorech'e, most villages in the mountains of eastern Chechnya seem to have been spared the large-scale, grid-like bombardments that rained down on Grozny and Argun. But Russian strikes often do not distinguish between civilians and fighters, even though the latter - for the most part - seem to have taken up strategic positions in mountainous, wooded countryside outside of settlements. As the Chechen fighters begin to fight a more partisan-style war, fighters will often travel back and forth between mountain positions and their homes in the village. Some villages refuse to let fighters enter, hoping to prevent an attack. One man from Turty-Yurt in eastern Chechnya explained, "There are no Dudayev fighters. They were not let into the village. They said, 'If you come, the village will be bombed, and we do not want to die.'"<sup>9</sup> International law requires efforts to protect civilian objects from becoming legitimate military targets.

The large number of displaced persons from Grozny and other lowland cities has increased the number of casualties in the hill country of eastern Chechnya. Many of the houses there do not have the solid, concrete basements that larger buildings in cities do, leaving the inhabitants with little shelter.

### **Zami-Yurt**

Zami-Yurt is a small village in the hills close to the Dagestani border. Russian forces began shelling the village in early March, increasing intensity by the beginning of April. As of this writing, Zami-Yurt has become home to various aid organizations. A middle-aged collective farm worker told of fleeing with her family because of heavy shelling:

There were no weapons in the village. . . . I have six sons, not one was a fighter. . . . The elders tried to negotiate, but nothing worked. Until the war came to us I thought that the Russians were fighting against bad types, [and therefore] nothing would happen to us. But when they started to bomb, I realized that they were fighting against simple people. We were shelled from planes and tanks. . . . They fired from Grads and Uragans.<sup>10</sup> Women and children were killed, twenty-five innocent people.<sup>11</sup>

Others who fled the village gave corroborating testimony.

### **Shali**

On March 21, Russian troops began a concerted attack on Shali which yielded them most of the village. Most civilians had fled by March 15, and Russian forces seized the city around April 1. Russian forces continued to shell it at least through April 18.

Pro-Dudayev television had reportedly urged civilians not to leave Shali, promising that if they stayed they would be evacuated if necessary. But according to Leila, a schoolteacher from Shali,

No one was around to take us out. Whoever could, fled. Whoever couldn't, stayed. On the morning of the 21st we looked around and everything seemed normal. The market was open, people were gathering, there were cars on the street. Then the shooting started. After a few shots, helicopters appeared and they started shooting from them. . . . Shells started landing in our yard; bombs, fragments started to fly through the windows. We spent the night in the cellar. There were wounded people in the cellar. We left the next day.<sup>12</sup>

Luiza Tsurayeva, a twenty-four-year-old baker, received multiple wounds in a rocket attack in Shali on March 2. The same attack caused her sister serious head injuries. Luiza was on her way out around 1:00 P.M. when, she reported,

Suddenly a rocket fell next to me, near the spigot in the yard. I screamed and my cousin ran over to me. . . . I was wounded in my shoulder, leg and arm. There were big pieces of shrapnel. My sister was wounded in her head. That wound will never heal. There was a guy who lived near us, he was twenty years old. He was killed. [Shrapnel] hit him right in his heart. His name was Aslan. He was a refugee from Grozny. My house was damaged, too: the windows and frames were knocked out and there is a big hole in the roof. <sup>13</sup>

Zazu Tsurayeva, a thirty-four-year-old woman with four children who fled Shali on March 21, reported:

Mozdok Street is totally in ruins. Sixty-eight houses were destroyed. They bombed on March 11 or 12. A vacuum bomb landed on the roof of one house. That's what the men said it was. Children died there. The house was reduced to rubble. Three or four days later they started digging the house up, looking for the children. They would find an arm here, a head there. Nothing remains of our building. Just ash.<sup>14</sup>

Others interviewed confirmed the level of destruction described by Ms. Tsurayeva.

### **Gudermes and Gudermes District**

Gudermes, Chechnya's second largest city and an important rail and communications junction, fell to Russian forces on March 29, 1995. Although the city eventually was captured without major resistance, prior to this, the city had been subjected to frequent air and artillery attacks. During these assaults, many civilians suffered from indiscriminate fire.

Fragments from an aerial bombing attack on Gudermes on March 1 pierced the arm, leg and knee cap of Valentina, a Russian woman who lived her entire life in Gudermes. She reported, "I went out to the garden. . . . A cluster bomb fell [there]. I was in the hospital in Gudermes, then on March 22 the hospital closed."<sup>15</sup>

Roza, a thirty-two-year-old mother of three, worked at the locomotive depot in Gudermes. She reported that her neighbor, Mrs. Akhmadova, a mother of five, had to have her leg amputated as a result of the wounds she received during the bombardment. Her other neighbor, Mrs. Duruyeva, died from shrapnel wounds to her head. Roza reported:

The night we left [on March 23] they threw cluster bombs. Once they start bombing from airplanes, it's impossible to live. . . . Every night we would run to School Number Five, next door, to the basement there. And the basement was full of water. We would come out in the morning and there would be still more planes. And bombs can't tell the difference: civilian, fighter, Russian, Chechen.<sup>16</sup>

### **Kundukhovo**

One resident of Kundukhovo, a suburb of Gudermes, who left the city on March 26, 1995, just before it fell, reported witnessing several civilian deaths due to Russian artillery fire and air attacks. In the third week in March a Russian air attack took the lives of several women in the house next to his. According to the man,

I heard the roar of a plane. I was used to it so I did not panic. To protect myself from shrapnel I moved to the far corner of the bathroom under the sink. There was an explosion and the windows and frames were blown in. . . . I heard some noises from the house next door - three women lived there, one had three children. I ran over to them and looked - it was simply terrifying. . . . A second bomb killed one person, I only know him by sight. He was a Russian. Between this man's home and the home of a friend of my brother there was a hole about three meters in diameter and about two, or two-and-a-half meters deep.<sup>17</sup>

### **Vedeno Region**

The mountainous area surrounding Vedeno, a town of about 500 homes some fifty kilometers southeast of Grozny, has come under intermittent Russian bombardment and surface shelling.<sup>18</sup> Intense bombing in late March and early April left residents and refugees helpless, as mountain homes reportedly have no basements in which to seek shelter. Vedeno's displaced person population had swelled to 35,000 to 40,000 by spring, according to estimates by the International Committee of the Red Cross as residents from the planes and from Grozny fled their homes. Fighters often shuttled between Vedeno, Grozny, and other lowland conflict areas.<sup>19</sup> In February the town elders had apparently attempted to negotiate with the Russian military command in Mozdok to halt bombardments, but to no avail.

Intense Russian bombing on March 24, 25, and 26 hit Vedeno and the nearby villages of Tsa-Vedeno, Dyshne-Vedeno, Elistanzhi, Verkhatoi, Benoi and Kharachoi. Asmat Zandiyevna, a thirty-seven-year-old teacher, reported that:

In Elistanzhi [ten kilometers west of Vedeno] they bombed a refugee camp. Seven people were killed. Refugees from Shali were there. As soon as they started to bomb, [on March 24 or 25] refugees fled. The plane flew right over them and bombed. Sometimes more than one plane would bomb at the same time. The earth would shake, like in an earthquake. We're all in a state of shock.<sup>20</sup>

Zara Gamirzayeva, a twenty-seven-year-old resident of Niki-Khita, a village twenty kilometers northwest of Veden, received wounds to her leg and side during a shelling attack on April 6. She reported:

On April 6 we were at home - myself, my two children, and my mother, who came to visit us. . . . Around 8:00 or 9:00 in the evening the Grad shelling and rocket shelling started. A rocket punched through the wall in the room where I was with the children. Both of my children were killed.<sup>[21](#)</sup>

### **Nozhai-Yurt**

Russian forces began intense bombing and shelling the border areas between Dagestan and Chechnya about April 23, and bombing continued through past April 28, when the Russian government's moratorium on military activities in Chechnya was due to take effect. Fighting moved to Nozhai-Yurt region, an area near the Dagestani border, by early April.

Since homes in Nozhai-Yurt are mainly spread out on mountain sides, and there are reportedly few, if any, streets with houses lined in a row, destruction to houses was correspondingly scattered. The exception was houses near the main target of attack: a brick factory between Nozhait-Yurt and Betti-Mokhk, which served as the headquarters for a group of Dudayev fighters.

A villager named Khanbashi from Nozhai-Yurt who left the town in early April described how daily Russian air strikes failed to hit fighters based in hills outside the town but took a toll the inhabitants of Nozhai-Yurt:

Every day four helicopters fly missions over Nozhai-Yurt, in the afternoon and toward evening. I don't deny there are fighters there, they've occupied the heights [outside of the town]. . . . The shells fall into the village. And there are no fighters in the village. . . . The neighboring village of Galaity has also been bombed. When we left Nozhai-Yurt there were three or four destroyed homes.<sup>[22](#)</sup>

Another villager, Alkhazur Tovdarkhanov, who fled Nozhai-Yurt on April 24, 1995, after heavy Grad rocket fire fell on the center of the town confirmed this.<sup>[23](#)</sup> He reported that, beginning on April 3, the hospital could no longer operate. According to him, four civilians have been killed in Nozhai-Yurt because of indiscriminate fire: Abukha Doguyev, Rozenbek Tadtayev, a Mr. Ismuradov, and a Mr. Dukayev.

Aminat Betilgireyeva, thirty-two years of age, fled Nozhai-Yurt after Russian forces heavily bombed the village on April 3. She asserted that by that time, rebel troops were not in the village but at their posts in the outskirts, yet direct bombing of Nozhai-Yurt continued.<sup>[24](#)</sup>

Magomed, a thirty-year-old resident, reported that during that period

It became impossible to live there. They shoot long-range guns, from helicopters, shoot from airplanes. Every day and sometimes at night. Some houses have been destroyed there. How many, I can't say. Maybe ten. One of our neighbors was killed. He was an old man. He was sixty-three. His name was Abukha. He was killed when the [the town was under] a rocket attack and was being strafed by machine-gun fire from helicopters. Fighters aren't there, just elderly people and a few young people to guard the homes from thieves and marauders.<sup>[25](#)</sup>

### **Alleroi**

Since April, Chechen forces have fled the eastern cities of Argun, Shali, and Gudermes and taken up positions in the

hilly territory along the Dagestani border, including the village of Alleroi, whose population is approximately 4,500.

Rodikhman Daudova left Alleroi on April 27, 1995, after hiding for more than a month in the forest and in cellars to escape bombardment from Russian forces. According to her, about twenty percent of the structures in the village have been destroyed. She stated that:

Almost all the cattle have been killed. . . . [My own] house has been completely bombed out. . . . The shelling has been going on for the past month or so. First the outskirts of the village were shelled, then the houses themselves. The last week the shelling was extremely fierce. They bombed the village itself. The fighters, however, are located around the village in the forest. I [personally] know one of the people killed, Ramzan Turloyev.<sup>26</sup>

### **Suvorov-Yurt**

Suvorov-Yurt lies on the Moscow-Baky highway, about five kilometers north of Alleroi and fifteen kilometers west of Dagestan, and a scene of heavy-fighting. On April 19, Polukhan Iskhojayeva was in Suvorov-Yurt visiting her parents. In her words:

We were sitting around talking and suddenly they started bombing. My brother ran home and said the cattle had all run away and he couldn't round them up. We all ran downstairs to the cellar, and when [the bombing stopped] we went to the woods to look for the cattle. . . . When they ran back, we asked them where the cows were. They said, "How can you talk about cows! There are children out there herding them, a ten-year-old and a twelve-year-old. When we went up to them to ask them if they had seen our cows, the bombing started."

My father, brother and our dog jumped in a trench - there are trenches in the woods. As for the kids, the older one jumped into the trench in time, but the little boy went into the trench head first, lying down. . . . He died. The cows all scattered again, and my father and brother carried the dead boy past the woods to the village of Alleroi, where the boy was from.<sup>27</sup>

## **TARGETING OF CIVILIANS**

Russian troops in Chechnya continue a pattern of misconduct - including looting, arbitrary detention, wanton destruction, and in certain cases murder<sup>28</sup> - that has characterized their behavior since the beginning of the conflict.<sup>29</sup>

### **Samashki**

The worst single case of misconduct to date by Russian forces is the massacre in the village of Samashki on April 7 and 8, 1995. Official Russian sources estimate that at least 120 people died in the attack. The Russian military commander of the operation, Gen. Anatolii Kulikov, claims that the village of Samashki was an enemy stronghold and that most of those killed were fighters. He said he had no objections to the Russian procurator's office investigating reports of murder of civilians during the assault. Memorial, however, has compiled credible evidence that ninety-four of the fatalities were civilians -- a strong indication that the Russian forces violated the rule of proportionality.

Moreover, Memorial representatives and independent journalists have reported credibly that Russian soldiers wantonly attacked civilians and civilian dwellings by throwing hand grenades into cellars where civilians were hiding, burning houses with flamethrowers, and summarily shooting civilians.<sup>30</sup> Russian Human Rights Commissioner Sergei Kovalyev stated at a U.S. Congressional hearing on May 1, 1995, that approximately 375 houses had been destroyed in the village during the attack.<sup>31</sup> If the rebels were fighting from these structures, such destruction cannot be considered

a violation under international humanitarian law. If, however, only a small number of Chechen fighters had taken up positions in the buildings, the Russian forces would be responsible for disproportionate use of violence.

### **Gudermes**

A young witness reported that Dudayev fighters left Gudermes on March 26, and that Russian troops entered the city on armored personnel carriers two days later without meeting any resistance. He stated that when Russian troops entered the city, they torched many homes and arbitrarily detained young men, accusing them of being Dudayev fighters:

When the Russian soldiers entered they told everyone, "You're a fighter, You're a fighter," without even figuring out what's what. On March 29th and March 30th they started to burn homes and detain young people. . . . When they came in the courtyard, I fled and hid in the house next door. . . . They went into my house, there was some type of explosion, [and] it burned to the ground. . . . The soldiers burned three homes on my street, Chapayev. I ran to my uncle's house on Parkhomenko Street. I had to hide, then run, then hide. If they see someone young, they come up and say, "Ah, a fighter". . . . When I got there, soldiers were also burning homes. Only two remained, the rest were burning. They were using a flamethrower. An old man screamed at the soldiers not to burn [the houses], but they burned them anyway. . . . If there were valuables in a house, the soldiers took them out and loaded them on the armored personnel carrier. They took my uncle's tape deck and a couch. I saw them from where I was.<sup>32</sup>

### **Grozny**

Large sections of Grozny, especially the center and around the Minutka traffic circle, have been largely bombed out. The heavy bombardment there that characterized abuse during the initial stages of the war has been replaced by periodic looting and beatings of civilians. The account of one forty-year-old Chechen woman is representative of this abuse:

On April 18th we heard a cry. We initially thought [my neighbor] had had an attack [of epilepsy]. We hurried out of our house and saw two shoulders in black wool caps carrying her daughter away. She was seventeen. I only recognized her blue shoes. . . . Her head wasn't visible - they were carrying her so that her coat was pulled up over her head and her mid-section was bare up to her waist. Her mother was sitting on the ground, her legs shot by rifle fire, screaming, "My daughter!". . . . We picked the mother up. One of her legs was hanging on only by some skin.<sup>33</sup>

### **Shali**

There are reports of looting by Russian troops by Shali after they entered the village at the end of March. A Shali resident, Ms. Nunayeva, reported the following:

On the 31st of March they took everything, even the potatoes. . . . I went out to milk the neighbor's cows. . . . [The soldiers] said, "Granny, where do you live?" I said, "In this house." They screamed, "Come on, ten steps back." I was scared, so I took ten steps back.

We have seven carpets. Well, we had them and then the Russians took them away. My carpets were tied up because I thought I would take them away [somewhere safe], but there were no cars. My sons had tape recorders. I was standing by the other gate and I saw them - [the soldiers] were tossing out the tape recorders and the carpets. . . . I ran up [to the armored personnel carrier] and said, "Guys, that's not right. What are you doing?" They said, "It's an order."

[Later] I went up to the Russian commander. I said, "You're an honest person. I trust you. But give me back the

concrete blocks, the carpets that they took away, the mattresses and the blankets". . . But he said, "Granny, I can't blame them if they took your [blocks]. They need it. They also need a roof over their heads". . . The commander said I should have taken down the BTR's number, but I was so frightened I forgot.

That night Ms. Nunayeva heard noises in the courtyard. Too frightened to go outside, she said she watched as soldiers shot the dog, who had been tied up, laid two landmines, and drove away in an armored personnel carrier.<sup>34</sup>

### **Ishkoi-Yurt**

According to one resident, the village of Ishkoi-Yurt, a few kilometers north of Galaity and directly across the border from Dagestan, was marked for special retribution because it is the home of Sultan Geliskhanov, a leading Dudayev loyalist. Russian troops entered the village around April 20, approximately one month after Chechen forces had left the settlement, according to residents interviewed, and fought a number of inconclusive battles in the woods outside the town. Intensive shelling around the village caused civilians living on the outskirts to suffer stray fire and the undiscipline of Russian troops. According to one resident,

[The troops] drive through the village, killing cows, then crushing them with their armored personnel carriers. They drive by and shoot at houses with their automatic rifles. A woman was going along with a child in her hands. The woman was killed, but the child lived. A poor guy lives on the outskirts of the village. They killed one of his sheep. They killed another person's livestock. The troops stole the VCR of one man and the tape deck of another. They stole a sack of flour, smashing down its owner with a rifle butt.<sup>35</sup>

## **TARGETING OF DISPLACED PERSONS**

According to the UNHCR, there are 50,000 to 80,000 displaced persons from eastern Chechen towns and villages in Dagestan alone.<sup>36</sup> This population is extremely mobile, often fleeing native villages when fighting nears and then returning once things quiet down to check on homes and relatives and family members who remained behind. They are frequently killed by indiscriminate fire as they escape the battle zone or return to search for relatives. Attacks on this highly vulnerable group violate the protection owed to civilians and, in addition, violate the duty of the force that causes the displacement to receive the displaced population in good care.

On March 23, Sergei Taramov, a forty-one-year-old Chechen, was killed in a shelling attack as he attempted to rescue a child from the village of Tsotsin-yurt. His wife, Tamara Taramova, told our field investigators that he had made two previous trips to bring people out of danger:

I didn't want him to go a third time, but this woman came to him - she had to get her child out. She cried and begged him [to help her]. He felt sorry for her. . . . There were three other people in the car. They shot at them from a helicopter with a high-caliber machine gun. The gas tank exploded. Sergei and the passenger in the front seat died. The man in the back jumped out, and the woman was wounded. The burned out car is still there.

Now my son - he's thirteen - is sick. He's in a state of shock after his father's death. Nothing helps him, and there's no money to buy medicine. He doesn't know his father died a painful death. He carries his father's picture in front of him, keeps looking at it and cries.<sup>37</sup>

On April 9, forty-three-year-old Zulpa Badaeva was wounded in a rocket attack on the road from Bachi-Yurt, east of Oyskhara. A resident of Geldagany, Ms. Badaeva fled to the home of relatives after her village was bombed. She had been travelling with her father and brother when their car was shelled in broad daylight, about 1:00 P.M. She reported:

We had just left [Bachi-Yurt] and the shelling started. Explosions were spreading out behind us, the earth was shaking. I was sitting in the front with my father and brother when the car rolled over, and I was thrown out of the car. I lost consciousness. When I came to I heard my brother screaming, "Sister, where are you?" Then I lost consciousness again. My father and brother were also thrown from the car through the windshield. When my brother started to lift me up, I screamed in pain. My arm was broken in several places. I had a serious concussion, and to this day I can't walk because I'm so dizzy. Someone took me to the hospital in Bachi-Yurt. What are they doing? Why are they bombing us?

I fled from Geldagana to Bachi-Yurt, and we didn't even have cellars there. And now they're bombing heavily in Bachi-Yurt. My mother and children are there. What will become of them? I don't know.<sup>38</sup>

Lursa Zakayeva, Grozny resident who had sought refuge in the village of Belgatoy, reported the deaths of several displaced persons she knew who were killed in flight. She added:

People died, refugees who believed what they had heard on Russian television, about how it was calm in the area around Grozny. So they decided to go back home [to Grozny].

[My relative, Aslanbek Zakayev,] had heard that military activities were getting started [on the road south of Shali] and he wanted to get his family out of Elistanzhi. On the way out, a helicopter started following the car. [Aslanbek's] father was in the car, and his two nephews. When they saw the helicopter they jumped out of the car and ran off the road, but the helicopter kept hunting them down. Aslanbek was hit in the head with a high-caliber machine gun. He died immediately before his father's eyes. He was thirty years old. His father was wounded, lost a lot of blood, and finally died from a heart attack. His name was Makhma Zakayev. He was fifty-six. Aslanbek's two nephews were wounded, and they're in the hospital.<sup>39</sup>

Numerous others interviewed reported witnessing or being wounded in similar attacks near Khasavyurt, Geremchuk, Kurchaloi and Khidi-Khutor.

## REPRISALS AGAINST CIVILIANS IN THE COURSE OF DISARMAMENT

A disturbing development during the period of this study has been the Russian forces' abuse of their right to disarm to mask for collective punishment against civilians.<sup>40</sup> Collective punishment is expressly prohibited by Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Arms searches fall fully within the prerogatives of federal forces; however, Human Rights Watch/Helsinki is concerned that the disarmament process has been carried out in an arbitrary and abusive fashion. Typically, a village as a whole is asked to turn over an arbitrary number of weapons, a figure determined by "intelligence reports." A village is told to turn over so many weapons or face the consequences. Demands for weapons sometimes serve as a pretext for an attack or for the detention of individuals.

The most infamous case of such abuse occurred in the village of Samashki. On April 6, 1995, the assistant commander of Russian forces in Chechnya, General Antonov, demanded that the village turn over 264 automatic weapons. When the village could not meet this demand, Russian forces surrounded the village, bombarded it, and then stormed it. Scores of civilians were massacred during the raid.

According to residents in Bachi-Yurt, a village about twenty-three kilometers southeast of Gudermes, Russian military authorities demanded that the village elders give them a set number of weapons or they would bomb the town. The villagers reported that, unable to produce the requisite amount, they even bought weapons to turn over to the Russians. Failing to supply weapons whose serial numbers corresponded to those on the Russians' list, however, they were unable to fulfill the agreement, and the village was shelled.<sup>41</sup>

A resident of Alleroi, near the Dagestani border, told a similar story:

The elders went to a negotiation [with the Russian command] and it was agreed that the village would not be bombed. The military people responded, "Okay, we will not bomb the village if you hand over the weapons." In fact they gave over the weapons, but the military people said that they have orders and nevertheless had to shell the village.<sup>42</sup>

In Betti-Mokh, a small village in hilly country near the Dagestani border, village elders were told to buy weapons to surrender even if they did not own them. According to one villager,

... [The] elders also tried to strike a deal with local commanders, who demanded that the village turn over forty-nine individuals and weapons. They [the Russian soldiers] said, "Hand over the forty-nine and give up the weapons, and will leave the village in peace. And if you don't have weapons, buy them."<sup>43</sup>

Nazhmutdin Mantsaev, the elder of the SPTU-23 refugee dormitory, told Human Rights Watch /Helsinki and Memorial that every day he would hear two helicopter sorties.

One [helicopter] observes, four bomb. They bombed Koshkeldy, the woods around it, and the cemetery. The elders went to the military people, asked them not to bomb. They [the military] told the people: hand over so many automatic weapons. So people bought guns just to hand them over, but they bombed anyway.

## **Belgatoi**

Lursa Zakayeva, a Grozny resident who had sought refuge with relatives in Belgatoi, returned to Belgatoi on April 21 to have a look at the village. Several houses were burned. Russian soldiers demanded automatics and made other conditions, such as

Give us so many guns and the village won't suffer. Hand over the fighters who are on the lists. We have lists of people who are fighting - and we'll leave you alone." But how can we hand over guns that we don't have? Some representative from the military was there and spoke with the local authorities, with the elders. They had bought automatics - anyone who had money was forced to buy them - and they handed over seven automatics so they would leave us alone. That was about eighteen days ago. My aunt told me this. Her husband is one of the religious authorities in Belgatoi. Those Russians left, and replacements came. Some high-ranking officer came into the village and said, "We have reports that you have weapons. Hand them over." We don't have weapons, they said, "everything we had we collected and gave over." "No, we'll give you a five-day deadline. If you don't give us so many weapons, then the village will be shot from the ground up." The elders asked the fighters not to stay in Belgatoi, and so they left.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Chechens, closely related to the Ingush, are an indigenous Caucasian people. After a series of wars lasting from 1817-1864, the Tsarist government brought Chechnya under its control. In 1934, seventeen years after the Bolsheviks took power, the Chechen-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR) was formed. Ten years later, Stalin abolished the republic and brutally deported all Chechens and Ingush, then approximately 800,000 people, to Central Asia; an estimated 240,000 died. The republic was abolished. In 1957, both peoples were allowed to return, and the Chechen-Ingush ASSR was reestablished, albeit within slightly different borders. The area was an important oil-producing region and became heavily industrialized under Soviet rule.

In November 2, 1991, Chechnya declared independence from Russia under the leadership of a former Air Force

General, Dzhokar Dudayev.<sup>44</sup> Earlier, forces loyal to Dudayev overthrew a temporary government that had in turn toppled the old-line Communist Party leadership supportive of the August 1991 attempted coup against Mikhail Gorbachev. On October 27, 1991, Dudayev was elected president in elections that were riddled with accusations of fraud. The Russian government condemned the elections and refused to recognize Chechen independence. In November 1991, President Yeltsin ordered Interior Ministry troops to restore order in Chechnya, but a determined Chechen response, and public outcry in Russia, forced their withdrawal. In the summer of 1992, President Dudayev closed the Chechen parliament after a clash with its members, and governed Chechnya by direct presidential rule. A violent clash between the National Guard, loyal to Dudayev, and the pro-parliament opposition in July 1993 left about 100 people dead.

In the spring of 1994, Russian and Chechen officials reportedly agreed to negotiations to work out Chechen-Russian differences. By the summer of 1994, after a series of bloody hijackings by armed bands in Chechnya struck southern Russia, Moscow announced that it would no longer tolerate Dudayev's regime. On July 29, 1994, the Russian government issued a statement calling the situation in Chechnya "out of control." In August the Russian government began openly and covertly to support an anti-Dudayev umbrella group called The Temporary Council, under the leadership of Umar Avturkhanov, in the Nadterechni region, fifty miles north of Grozny. Moscow poured funds and weapons into the region controlled by the Chechen opposition.

Heavy fighting exploded between the opposition and Dudayev's forces in September and October, with the opposition suffering serious setbacks. On September 16, Dudayev declared martial law in Chechnya. On October 4, President Yeltsin said he would not use force "under any circumstances," and Defense Minister Grachev said his forces would keep the fighting localized. On November 26, the Chechen opposition - backed by active duty Russian forces reportedly recruited by the Russian FSK (the former KGB) - suffered a serious defeat in an attack on Grozny, and over seventy Russians were taken prisoner. Four days later President Yeltsin gave Dudayev's forces forty-eight hours to disband all units, disarm, and release all prisoners, or Russia would impose a state of emergency. On December 1, Yeltsin vowed to help the Russian prisoners, the first indirect acknowledgement of Russian involvement.

December brought some hope of peace, but ultimately ended in bloody, heavy fighting between Russian and pro-Dudayev forces with grievous results for civilians. In early December continued air raids - for which Russia denied responsibility - struck Grozny, hitting the airport and other areas. On December 6, however, Defense Minister Grachev and President Dudayev met, the first meeting between a senior Russian official and Dudayev since 1991.

Grachev promised that, "there would not be a military solution to the question." On December 11, however, 40,000 Russian army and interior ministry troops moved against Grozny from the north, east, and west, and Russian planes commenced withering air attacks against Grozny and the surrounding area, including neighboring Ingushetiya. Hundreds of civilians were killed in the attacks. Approximately 300,000 displaced fled the bombing, according to ICRC estimates. On December 26, President Yeltsin ordered a halt to the ground assault, but on New Year's Eve a failed Russian attempt to take Grozny left hundreds of Russian soldiers dead.

Fighting did not end when Russian troops raised the Russian flag over the bombed-out presidential palace in Grozny on January 19, 1995. Fighting quickly spread or intensified in areas to the west, south, and east of Grozny. Heavy fighting and bombing occurred in Samashki in far western Chechnya, in Assinovskaya in Ingushetiya, and in Argun and Chechen-Aul, southeast of Grozny. Russian planes bombed deep into Chechnya, hitting the road between Goity and Saryi Atagi. New columns of displaced people were on the move.

On February 13, 1995, cease-fire talks commenced in Ingushetiya between the Russian commander of operations in Chechnya, Colonel General Anatoly Kulikov, and the chief of staff of Chechen Forces, Aslan Maskhadov. Ingush Vice-President Boris Agapov acted as a mediator in the negotiations, which were renewed on February 15 and

February 17. The talks dealt exclusively with military matters, and the cease-fire that was agreed on was only partially observed. The cease-fire ended Sunday evening, February 19, 1995, and has not been renewed. A planned exchange of prisoners was not fully carried out.

On March 21, Russian forces began a large-scale offensive that resulted in the capture of the last remaining major lowland Chechen settlements held by Dudayev forces: Gudermes, Argun, and Shali. By early April fighting quickly spread to the mountainous areas of western and eastern Chechnya, and partisan warfare broke out.

Between April 6-8, in what is to date the worst recorded violation of humanitarian law, Russian forces attacked the western Chechen village of Samashki, largely destroyed the settlement and killing scores of civilians. On April 28, 1995, a unilateral, three-week ceasefire was instituted by the Russian government, largely to shelter the May 9 World War Two Victory celebrations. Chechens for their part stepped-up raids to disrupt the celebration.

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### *Human Rights Watch/Helsinki*

Human Rights Watch is a nongovernmental organization established in 1978 to monitor and promote the observance of internationally recognized human rights in Africa, the Americas, Asia, the Middle East and among the signatories of the Helsinki accords. It is supported by contributions from private individuals and foundations worldwide. It accepts no government funds, directly or indirectly. Kenneth Roth is the executive director; Cynthia Brown is the program director; Holly J. Burkhalter is the advocacy director; Ann S. Johnson is the development director; Gara LaMarche is the associate director; Juan E. Méndez is general counsel; Susan Osnos is the communications director; and Derrick Wong is the finance and administration director. Robert L. Bernstein is the chair of the board and Adrian W. DeWind is vice chair. Its Helsinki division was established in 1978 to monitor and promote domestic and international compliance with the human rights provisions of the 1975 Helsinki Accords. It is affiliated with the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, which is based in Vienna, Austria. Holly A. Cartner is acting executive director; Erika Dailey, Rachel Denber, Ivana Nizich and Christopher Panico are research associates; Anne Kuper, Ivan Lupis, Alexander Petrov and Lene Simon are associates. Jonathan F. Fanton is the chair of the advisory committee and Alice Henkin is vice chair.

<sup>1</sup> The report also has information from Gudermes, Shali, and Grozny, but the main focus is devoted to these two regions.

<sup>2</sup> See "Russia: Russia's War in Chechnya: Victims Speak Out," (January 1995, Vol. 7, No. 1); "Russia: War in Chechnya: New Report from the Field," (January 1995, Vol. 8, No. 2); and "Russia: Three Months of War in Chechnya," (February 1995, Vol. 7, No. 6).

<sup>3</sup> See "Russia: War in Chechnya: New Report from the Field," Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, (January 1995, Vol. 7, No.2).

<sup>4</sup> U.S. State Department Dispatch, Vol. 6, 1995, Office of Public Communications.

<sup>5</sup> See *Ibid*, and Michael Sheridan, "Russia and U.S. Remain Cordial but Poles Apart," *The Independent*, March 24, 1995.

<sup>6</sup> See Steven Greenhouse, "U.S. Pressures Moscow Over War in Chechnya," *International Herald Tribune*, April 13, 1995, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> See Clay Chandler, "IMF Approves \$7 Billion Russia Loan," *The Washington Post*, April 12, 1995, p.F3.

<sup>8</sup> See Stephen Erlanger, "Russian Troops Take Last Chechen Cities," *The New York Times*, April 1, 1995. Human Rights Watch/Helsinki interview with Olivia Ward, *Toronto Star*. Ms. Ward was in Argun on April 26, 1995.

9 Interview, Pokrovskoye, April 27, 1995.

10 These weapons are notorious for their lack of precision.

11 Interview, Khasavyurt, April 23, 1995.

12 *Ibid.*

13 *Ibid.*

14 *Ibid.*

15 Interview, Khasavyurt, April 28, 1995.

16 Interview, Khasavyurt, April 23, 1995.

17 Interview, Khasavyurt, April 25, 1995.

18 See Soni Efron, "Chechen Spring Ushers In Season of Russian Air Strikes," *The Los Angeles Times*, April 10, 1995, p. A1.

19 See Richard Boudreaux, "Chechnya's Mountain Men Say They'll Vanquish Russia," *The Los Angeles Times*, January 2, 1995.

20 Interview, Khasavyurt, April 28, 1995.

21 *Ibid.*

22 Interview, Khasavyurt, April 23, 1995.

23 Interview, Pokrovskoye, April 27, 1995.

24 *Ibid.*

25 *Ibid.*

26 Interview, Khasavyurt, April 27, 1995.

27 Interview, Khasavyurt, April 23, 1995.

28 Human Rights Watch/Helsinki has credible but as yet independently unconfirmed information indicating serious, wanton destruction and looting by Russian forces in the village of Belorech'e, seven kilometers southeast of Gudermes (The village also goes by the name of Alaskhan-Yurt). In mid-March, Russian troops entered the village, looting and gratuitously destroying homes. One unconfirmed report states that 148 homes were destroyed without legitimate military purpose.

29 See Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, "Russia: Three Months of War in Chechnya," February 1995, Vol. 7, No. 6; Thomas de Waal, "Russian Troops Run Wild in Grozny," *The Moscow Times*, February 14, 1995, p.1; James Rupert, "Grozny Imprisoned by Fear: Survivors of Bitter Battle Now Hide From Russian Troops," *The Washington Post*, February 13, 1995, p. A12.

[30](#) Notes from Memorial representatives. Memorial plans to issue a comprehensive report on the massacre in Samashki.

[31](#) Hearing before the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Washington D.C., May 1, 1995.

[32](#) Interview, Khasavyurt, April 25, 1995.

[33](#) Interview, Khasavyurt, April 24, 1995.

[34](#) Interview, Khasavyurt, April 23, 1995.

[35](#) Interview, Khasavyurt, April 28, 1995.

[36](#) Phone interview with Javier Honorato, UNHCR Emergency Office, Makhachkala, May 4, 1995.

[37](#) Interview, Khasavyurt, April 23, 1995.

[38](#) Interview, Khasavyurt, April 28, 1995.

[39](#) Interview, Khasavyurt, April 23, 1995.

[40](#) Weapons proliferate throughout the Caucasus as Soviet-era armories have fallen prey to nationalist groups or were emptied by corrupt members of the Russian military. When Chechnya declared independence in late 1991, Chechen groups either seized Soviet military storehouses or prevented Soviet authorities from withdrawing weaponry. Later, a deal brokered between Defense Minister Pavel Grachev and President Dudayev on dividing Soviet arms in Chechnya equally between Federal and Chechen forces does not seem to have been carried out, with most weapons falling to the latter. After open hostilities broke out in 1994, even more weapons poured into the region, either covertly funneled by Russian security agencies to anti-Dudayev forces or given out by Dudayev forces to militias.

[41](#) Interview, Khasavyurt, April 23, 1995.

[42](#) Interview, Khasavyurt, April 27, 1995.

[43](#) *Ibid.*

[44](#) The Ingush part of the Chechen-Ingush ASSR was not included in this declaration. It became a republic of the Russian Federation in 1992. Before the fighting started, Chechnya had a mixed population of about one million.